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Countries Call on the EU to Enforce “Values” Through Speech Rules

The promise of unity is starting to sound like a contract written in conditional freedoms.

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European governments are intensifying pressure on Brussels to tighten control over which organizations receive EU funding, using the language of “combating hate” to justify measures that could sharply restrict free expression.

France, Austria, and the Netherlands have jointly circulated a paper calling on the European Commission to withdraw financial support from any group that does not conform to “European values.”

The document, seen by Politico (https://www.politico.eu/article/france-austria-netherlands-eu-tighten-funding-rules-tackle-hate-speech/), urges member states to “redouble their efforts to combat racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim hatred” and to ensure “no support is given to entities hostile to European values, in particular through funding.”

Behind the rhetoric of tolerance, the plan lays out a system that ties access to EU money directly to ideological loyalty.

Under the proposal, beneficiaries of programs such as Erasmus+ and CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values) would be required to sign pledges confirming that they “respect and promote EU rights and values.”

The Commission would also be instructed to apply existing budget rules that allow for excluding groups accused of “inciting hatred.”

The initiative arrives just ahead of a European Council meeting in Brussels, where leaders are set to discuss a range of topics, including Ukraine, migration, defense, and Europe’s digital and environmental goals.

A draft of the Council’s conclusions adds another layer by insisting that “EU values apply equally in the digital sphere,” with the “protection of minors” highlighted as a key aim.

What looks like a defense of European ideals increasingly resembles an effort to police opinions.

By expanding the concept of hate speech both online and offline, the document could allow EU institutions to label controversial or dissenting views as violations of European values. This would effectively hand Brussels the power to determine which voices are acceptable in public debate.

The proposal also calls on Europol (https://reclaimthenet.org/europol-calls-for-encryption-backdoors-threat-to-security-democracy) to develop a dedicated project to investigate hate crimes and encourages new education and awareness programs on tolerance and Holocaust

remembrance. Yet the focus on “values” and “respect” leaves open who decides what those words mean, and how far the EU may go in enforcing them.

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